

City sweats it out as temp hovers around 37 to 40C

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Thane: With the maximum temperatures in the city hovering anyway around 37 to 40 degrees Celsius since the last 10 days, environmentalists have forecast a heat wave soon. They have also predicted a rise in humidity levels in the days ahead.

"A few years ago, as soon as one would enter Thane city from Mumbai, one could feel the temperatures drop a few notches. Thane city has been comparatively cooler than neighbouring Mumbai as it was less polluted and had many trees. But this isn't the scene now. With rapid concretization, the green cover has been decreasing. This has led to an increase in temperatures," said environmentalist Prasad Karnik.

Water scarcity and increase in forest fires is another cause for the soaring temperatures, claim green activists. "The green cover in the city has been facing the axe for a while now. Be it Yeoor forest, creek-side mangroves or the tree-lined streets in the city, many trees have been cut to make way for skyscrapers. Trees help to keep the place cool and prevent the earth from heating up. It would also preserve the moisture in the soil. But with the city turning almost into a metro, the pleasant weather which Thaneites used to enjoy a few years ago is no longer there," said Stalin D, director of NGO Vanashakti.

"The scanty tree cover has also reduced the breeze in the city, making the air hot and humid," he added.

Environmentalists believe that rampant forest fires in the city have added to the heat this summer.

"Yeoor has seen three times more fires this year as compared to last year. While officials claim that they are natural, this can't be possible as the temperature needs to exceed 45 degrees Celsius for such a scenario. Besides, officials are not doing anything to stop these mischief mongers. The forest department must clear all the dry leaves so that such fires do not take place," added Stalin.